

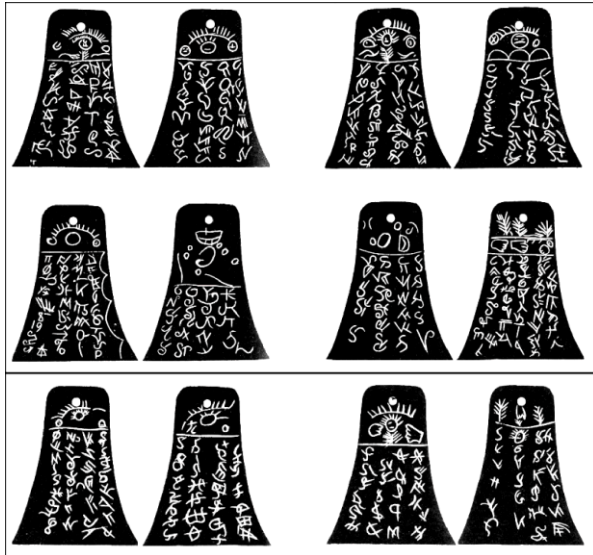
# **“PRESIDENT JOSEPH HAS TRANSLATED A PORTION”: SOLVING THE MYSTERY OF THE KINDERHOOK PLATES**

*by Don Bradley*

I know after the presentation earlier today you are probably wondering if I am going to be speaking about “uncombable hair syndrome,” but I’m sorry to disappoint. Last night I went to the speaker’s dinner, and we had a delicious catered meal. They served something that was very much like chicken cordon blue. And when I was done with all but two bites of mine, I realized with the help of Debbie Peterson that it was mostly raw. So as I left the speaker’s dinner last night, there was some question about whether I was going to be a speaker today. But I’m happy to report that I did not succumb to the effort to food poison me, by certain deceased poets. So here I am, and we’ll get going here.

Sorry, wrong venue. I am delighted to be speaking at FAIR today, for a number of reasons. This isn’t something that I would’ve even just fairly recently anticipated doing. Here’s my snazzy title: “Joseph Smith’s translation from the Kinderhook plates: A historical Mystery.”

## The Kinderhook Plates - Facsimiles



Here are the plates, or facsimiles made of them in 1843 in Nauvoo. Most of you probably know the basic story and basic issue, but I'll lay the groundwork for that. So the Kinderhook plates were dug out of a mound near Kinderhook, Illinois, about 75 miles south of Nauvoo in the spring of 1843. There were a few men who were doing the digging, and there were several onlookers, including two Latter-day Saints. Someone had the bright idea soon thereafter of borrowing the plates ostensibly to show them to neighbors, and they high-tailed it to Nauvoo and took them to Joseph Smith for him to examine and presumably to translate from.

Joseph Smith put them on display at his house, and one of the many people who examined them there was Joseph Smith's private clerk, William Clayton. William Clayton is a man whom his biographer James B. Allen described as having been, probably, as much, in the last two years of Joseph's life, as much in his confidence as anyone. Clayton kept an excellent diary that's a resource for a lot of great about Joseph. But this particular entry is very controversial. I'll just read the part here right now that deals with Kinderhook plates. "President Joseph has translated a portion, and says they contain the history of the person with whom they were found; and he was a descendant of Ham, through the loins of Pharaoh, King of Egypt, and that he received his kingdom through the ruler of heaven and earth." So, so far not necessarily a problem. Joseph Smith is a translator, that's why the plates are brought to him.

A Problem comes here, when one of the men who dug up the plates, Wilber Fugate, writes a letter to James T. Cobb, step-son of Brigham Young, who had become alienated from the Church, in 1879. He says, "I received your letter in regard to those plates, and will say answer they are a humbug, gotten up by Robert Wiley, Bridge Whitten, and myself. We read in Pratt's prophecy that 'truth would spring up out of the earth.' We concluded to prove the prophecy by way of a joke," so he's talking about something that Parley P. Pratt had written. "Bridge Whitten cut them [the plates] out some pieces of copper Wiley and I

made the hieroglyphics by making impressions on beeswax and filling them with acid and putting it on the plates.” So process he is describing of using acid to burn in these designs is called etching. Etching is relatively modern technology, developed in the late 1400s and used for make prints. And this is an example of one of the early prints made through etching in the 1500s.

So a good question that arises then, “Were the Kinderhook plates characters engraved or were they etched?” If they were engraved, they could be ancient; if they were etched, as Fugate said then they could only be modern and the Kinderhook plates would have to be a forgery. The plates were tested in the 1970s. Well, a surviving plate, that’s at the Chicago Historical Society was tested, and it was in fact etched, as Fugate had said. The alloy was also tested and it’s a modern copper alloy. So the plates were a forgery, “bogus.”

So if the plates were forged, one good question that arises here is, “If the plates were forged, who forged them?” I think the best answer to that question, at present, would be, Mark Ashurst-McGee? Yes, Mark Ashurst McGee! Mark, I don’t know if I see him here, Mark is a good friend of mine (I hope, still), and he is volume editor with the Joseph Smith papers. Mark has a great interest in the Kinderhook plates, so much that several years ago, he sent me an envelope and in it there was note that said, “I dug this up in my back yard,” and there was this: a plate. And this is a plate that was cut to the dimensions of the plates that were found in the mound, and Mark actually made this, thus making him perhaps the only living forger of Kinderhook plates. So this is how much Mark really wants to understand the Kinderhook plates, how they were made, and everything about them. So here is a picture of Marks plate, this is not the real forgery, this is his forged forgery.

## A Kinderhook Plate —not the real forgery.



I bring Mark up, in particular, because he does know so much about the Kinderhook plates, and not only because he forged his own, but because he has done some much research, and in fact some of the ideas I'll be drawing on, as I'll mention later today, come from Mark, and he is a collaborator with me on a larger project where this research you here about today will be published.

So, Latter-day Saints have certainly not been the only people to take an interest in the Kinderhook plates. Critics have taken a particularly keen interest. So here is an anti-Mormon from the 1940s, James D. Bales, who had particularly good rhetorical skills, he put the argument thus: "Only a bogus prophet translated bogus plates."

So, there's of course an apologetic response to this, Stanley Kimball, exactly 30 years ago this month, published an article in which he argued that William Clayton was merely reporting Nauvoo rumor about the plates and didn't have direct information from Joseph, saying the Joseph had translated from the Kinderhook plates. The primary basis for his reasoning is this letter, six days after Clayton's journal entry, from Parley P. Pratt to his cousin, John Van Cautt. He talks about the finding of the plates, and what he knows about them, what he's heard about them. Kimball noted some contradictions between the two, and he reasoned from that neither of these men really knows what they're talking about, they are just relying on rumor.

Clayton	Pratt
I have seen 6 brass plates	Six plates having the appearance of Brass
found in Adams County	in Pike Co. Illinois.
by some persons	by a gentleman
who were digging in a mound	have lately been dug out of a mound
about 6 feet from the surface of the earth	15 ft. underground
They found a skeleton with was 9 foot high	His bones were found in the same vase (made of Cement).
[The plates] contain the history of the person with whom they were found & he was a descendant of Ham	[The plates] contain the genealogy of one of the ancient Jaredites back to Ham the son of Noah.
through the loins of Pharaoh king of Egypt	engravings in Egyptian language

You can see there is some overlap and some difference. Clayton says six brass plates, Pratt says basically the same thing. Clayton says Adams County, Pratt says Pike County; it was Pike County, Adams County is the nearby, adjoining county. Clayton says “some persons” had found them, Pratt says “a gentleman.” They both say they had been dug out of a mound. Clayton says six feet from the surface, Pratt says 15. Clayton says they found a skeleton which was nine feet high, Pratt doesn’t mention the nine foot high skeleton, but there was common folklore at the time about nine foot tall people. The plates, from Claytons report, Joseph had said “they contain the history of the person with whom they were found, and he was descendant of Ham,” Pratt says “they contain the genealogy of one the ancient Jaredites, back to Ham son of Noah,” so they both say Ham, and Pratt adds the detail of a Jaredite, which we’ll get back to. Clayton says, “the man was decendent through the loins of Pharaoh, King of Egypt,” Pratt mentions that the engraving were in an Egyptian language, so they both give an Egyptian connection.

## Comparing Clayton and Pratt

- Clayton and Pratt disagree somewhat on the finding of the plates—for which neither was present.
- Clayton and Pratt largely agree on the content of the plates—that they contain the genealogy of a descendant of Ham whom they connect with Egypt.
- Pratt also says the man was a Jaredite, but thinks this is compatible with being a descendant of Ham.
- The argument that if Clayton and Pratt contradict then *both* are wrong and relying on rumor is a non sequitur.
- Clayton's account can't be dismissed as rumor just because it only partly agrees with Pratt's.

So let's compare Clayton and Pratt a little higher level here. Clayton and Pratt disagree somewhat on the finding of the plates, but we know that neither man was present for that. Primarily where they disagree it's on the finding of the plates, which we know that neither of them was present for, so they're both necessarily going to be relying on what other people tell them. They largely agree on the content of the plates, that they contain the genealogy of a descendant of Ham, whom they connect with Egypt. Pratt also says the man was a Jaredite, but he thinks this compatible with being a descendant of Ham, so for him, that is not a contradiction, he apparently thinks the Jaredites are descendants of Ham.

Kimball's argument that if Clayton and Pratt contradict then they are both wrong and relying on rumor is a non-sequitur. If you have two people contradict, it means that at least one of them is wrong, but it doesn't follow that they are both wrong or relying on an unreliable source. Clayton's account, therefore, can't be dismissed as rumor just because it only partly agrees with Pratt.

So how much trust should we give to Clayton's account? If you look at his journal entry for the day, how well positioned was he to know Joseph's views on the Kinderhook plates? I'll take each of the items here from the entry that tell what else he was doing that day and look at them specifically.

So here he has this cryptic part of the entry that says, "At 10 m J to LW." What on earth is that? Well, fortunately, he tells us, in an affidavit, I believe 36 years later...or no, 32 years later, "On the first day of May, 1843, I officiated in the office of an elder, by marrying Lucy Walker to the prophet Joseph Smith at his own residence." Now, Lucy Walker actually lived at Joseph's house, so that makes sense. But it sounds like they were kind of tight, I mean, I've never sealed a wife to anybody, but it seems like kind of an

intimate thing to do. He says in the afternoon, now, he's at president Joseph's house, "he is gone out with Woodworth," he uses the present tense verb, he's out now, and where's Clayton? Clayton's at Joseph's. So Clayton has stayed at Joseph's and Joseph has gone out. And Clayton actually has his journal with him, he's writing in his journal at Joseph's house, which we will say further as we keep going.

So he says, that, "he borrowed 20 dollars of William Allen," then we've got the ellipses there, which is about having supper, which we'll get to, "President paid," past tense, "20 dollars to Woodworth for the Nauvoo house." So, these refer to things Joseph had done while he was out. So when Joseph comes back, Clayton is still there, and then Joseph goes out, and comes back again, and Clayton is updating his journal throughout the day, so he can writing "Joseph *is* out with Woodworth," then he can write, "he's borrowed money," "he's had supper with me," then he can write "he's taken that money and used it to pay Woodworth." So he says "I took supper with him." So he's not only performing an ordinance for Joseph and doing business with him, but also spending time socializing with him. There's a tracing of the plate that actually appears inside a journal entry, so these plates are, as you saw here, just a few inches high, so he actually traces that into the journal entry and writes around it. So Clayton, again, is writing in his journal at Joseph's, where the Kinderhook plates are on display. Clayton is curious about the plates while at Joseph's and spends portions of his day there different times with Joseph. Clayton likely records his information about the Kinderhook plates, like the rest of this entry (including the tracing and so on), at Joseph's house. We don't know that for sure, but it would make sense.

So what does this journal entry show? First, that morning, Clayton sealed a plural wife to Joseph. Second, Clayton was at Joseph's and writing in his journal while Joseph went out, returned, and went out again. Clayton updated his journal throughout the day. Clayton had supper with Joseph. Clayton was curious about the Kinderhook plates while at Joseph's, traced one of the plates into his journal, and maybe even there, but soon thereafter wrote a good bit in his journal about the plates. So it's in this context that Clayton writes, "President Joseph has translated a portion and says they contain..." what he says they contain.

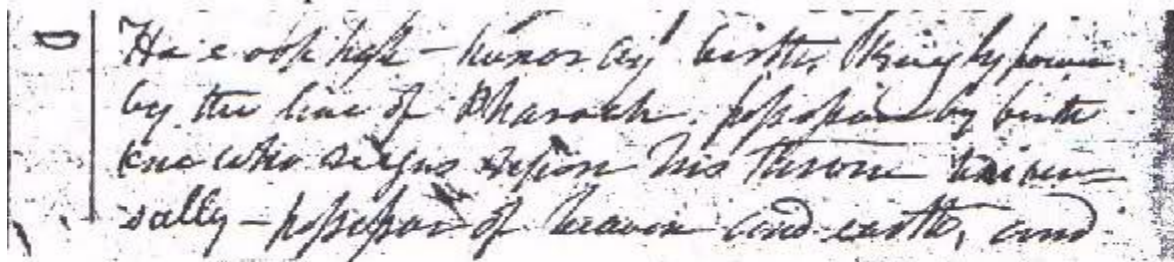
So, for Clayton to not know whether Joseph has translated from the Kinderhook plates, he would have needed to never discuss that matter with Joseph directly, even though, as Clayton says in later affidavits, he was with Joseph nearly every day. Clayton would've needed to here rumor that Joseph had translated, and of specifically what he had translated, but again not raised the subject with Joseph. And Clayton would have to be curious enough to write about the Kinderhook plates at length in his journal, at Joseph's house, trace the plate into his journal, listen to the idol rumors going around about it, and record those, but not curious enough to actually ask Joseph about the plates, even when he's closely involved with Joseph that day, and he has the ideal opportunity to ask. The plates are on display at Joseph's house that day, he's at Joseph's house through much of the day, he has supper with him, and so on.

So here's the problem, then: that Joseph, according to someone who was well positioned to know this, reportedly translated something from the Kinderhook plates, and the Kinderhook plates are a forgery. So Mark came up with a hypothesis that Joseph Smith translated from the Kinderhook plates, not as prophet, but just as someone who was interested in languages. We know that Joseph studied Hebrew, that he studied Greek, that

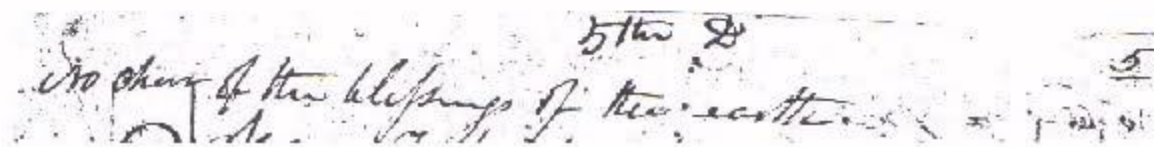
he studied German, So, he could've simply tried to figure out what was on the Kinderhook plates himself. And in support of this, Mark has pointed to Joseph Smith's journal, which was actually kept for him by his secretary Willard Richards, here under the date of May 7th, so the same day as that Parley Pratt letter, he says, "Forenoon," morning, Joseph "was visited by several gentlemen concerning the plates which were dug out of a mound near Quincy, and he sent by William Smith to the office for his Hebrew Bible and Lexicon." A Lexicon is a tool for translation. Why is he, if he's got the Kinderhook plates, and if these two things go together, why is he looking at the Kinderhook plates and calling for this foreign language translation tool unless he is trying to use it to figure out what's on the Kinderhook plates?

I thought this was a really intriguing hypothesis, but I actually didn't believe it, until I found the source that Joseph used to get this content that Clayton reports from the Kinderhook plates. So this is the content, and the question, "How do you get all of this out of a couple of Hebrew characters and bunch of random scribbles?" Mark has looked on the Kinderhook plates and found a few things that could pass for Hebrew characters scattered throughout all these other hundreds of characters. I've looked, and the only that I can really clearly see is an aleph, so an "A," and I don't see how you get this out of that.

Bottom of GAEL p. 4



Top of GAEL p. 5



This document has been talked about here before. This is the "Grammar and Alphabet of the Egyptian Language (GAEL)," or a page from it. That was a bound volume of Egyptian alphabet materials were put together in Kirtland in connection with the translation of the Book of Abraham. The exact history behind those is itself something of a matter of controversy. They're in the hand writing of Joseph Smith's scribes. So its page 4 here, this is actually, though, just the second page where they have characters listed. They'll show a character from the Book of Abraham related papyrus, then they show a name that's the sign of the character, and then a definition. So, specifically, down at the very bottom of the page there, we've got this boat shaped character they give the name "ho e oop hah" to, and here's the definition given: "Honor by birth, kingly power by the line of Pharaoh, possession by birth, one who reigns upon his throne universally. Possession of heaven and earth, and of the blessings of the earth."



## The Source of Joseph Smith's Kinderhook Plates "Translation"

### "Prest. J. ...says..."

He was a descendant of Ham through the loins of Pharaoh king of Egypt,

and...received his kingdom from the ruler of heaven & earth.

### Ho e oop hah, defined in GAEL

Honor by birth, kingly power by the line of Pharaoh; possession by birth;

one who reigns upon his throne universally — possessor of heaven and earth, and of the blessings of the earth.

Here, then, let's compare the two: what Clayton says Joseph Smith has translated from the Kinderhook plates, and the definition given for "ho e oop hah" in the GAEL. So in red there, you've got the idea of Kingship, and Joseph's says, according to Clayton, that the plates say this guy is a King, "received his kingdom"; in the "ho e oop hah" definition we've got "kingly power," "reigns upon his throne," in each case we are talking about a King. In blue there we've got, from the reported translation by Joseph from the Kinderhook plates, "descendant of Ham through the loins of Pharaoh," in the GAEL from this character we've got, "by the line of Pharaoh." Pharaoh is, of course, in the Book of Abraham described as a descendant of Ham, so if you are a descendant of Pharaoh you are a descendant of Ham, by definition. Then in violet here we've got from Joseph's reported translation of the Kinderhook plates, the phrase "ruler of heaven and earth," and from this definition for this character in the GAEL, we've got "possessor of heaven and earth."

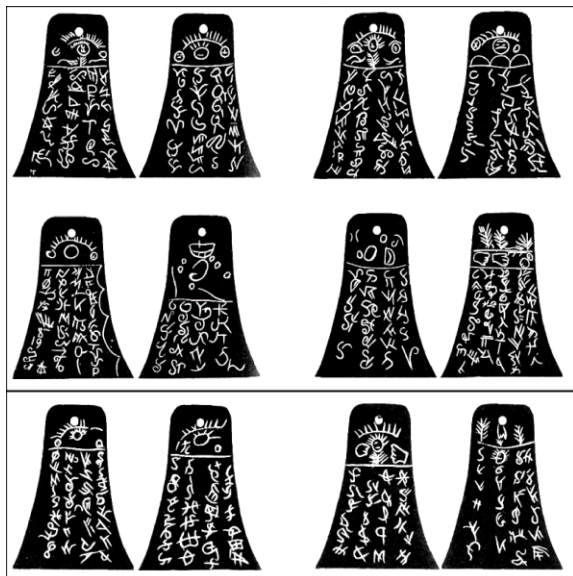
So if you look what is in black there, that is what doesn't overlap. So in the first column, the only substantive thing you've got is "Egypt," of course that's implied in being Pharaoh, that means you are King of Egypt. In the other column though, from the GAEL definition you've got a fair amount of black. So the definition for this character could not be derived simply from what Clayton says Joseph has translated from the Kinderhook plates, but the reverse isn't true. You could derive all the content that Clayton says Joseph gets off the Kinderhook plates from this one definition for a single character in the GAEL.

So, the question then would become, "How, exactly, do you get this material specifically off of the Kinderhook plates?" Well, both the Kinderhook plates and the GAEL are covered in characters. So here we've got that particular character, the "ho e oop hah", and you can see it's got this boat shape.



By the way, these images are courtesy of the Church Historical Department, for which I am very grateful. I meant earlier to ask you to look at these and see what stood out to you as a few of the larger and more prominent characters, and then I was going to ask at this point questions about which you thought, but a little late.

## The Kinderhook Plates - Facsimiles

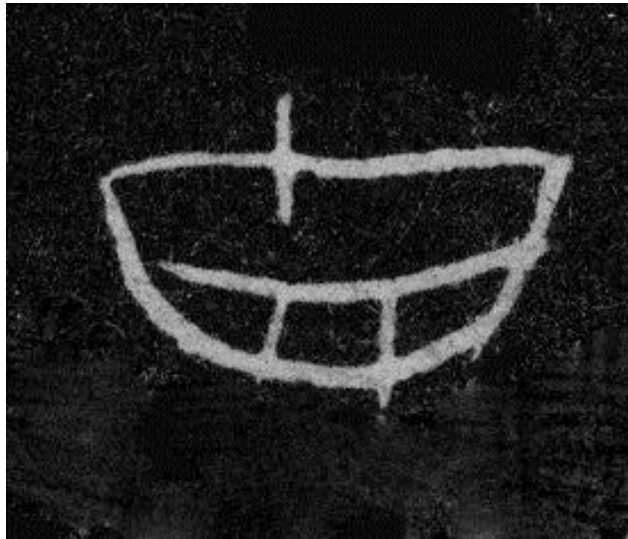


### Kinderhook Plate



So, if you see the second row of plates there, the second plate over, you've got a boat-shaped character there at the top, and you've got, really, a lot of blank space around it, plus you've got a line on each plate, near the top, that separates the top characters from the lower characters. For that plate, you've got the line going down much lower, and so the top character on that plate is more distinctive and there is more blank space around that top character, and it's a very large, prominent character. So there's the up close on that. So here is that character closer.

## Character from Top of Kinderhook Plate



To understand how, if Joseph Smith were using the GAEL to examine the Kinderhook plates, to understand how he would have done that, we need to understand something about the system of character analysis used on the GAEL.

## GAEL Character Dissection

No	Character	
10	⌈	Kiah brom - Kiah brom - am - jub - god - an
11	⌈	This character shown dissected.
	⌈	
	⌈	Kiah brom - am - Coming down from the beginning - right by birth - and also by blessing, and by promise - promised made; a father of many nations; a prince of peace; one who keeps the commandment of God; a patriarch; a righteous heir; a high priest.

So here at the top, this is not one of the high quality images from the Church, but at the top here you've got a character for which the transliteration is given kia-brom, and then underneath that is says, "It character shown dissected," and you've got the character

broken into its component lines and dots, So the graphemes that make up this character are separated out, and then each of those is treated as a separate character, and assigned its own name, and its own definition. So if you were going to use this as a basis for looking at the Kinderhook plates, then this character here from the plates would not be one single character. You would break it down so that top line that cuts through the boat shape would be a single character, that theta like mark inside would be it's own character, and so you would get something like, now with the miracle of photo shop, this, and then again with miracle of photo-shop, there's a positive of that.

## Boat-shaped Character Isolated by Dissection

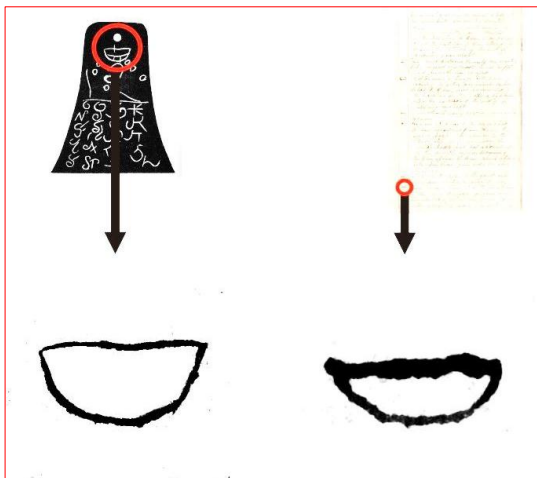


So here, let's compare the two characters. It shows where each is taken from on its plate or page, and the difference here, really,



is just in the depth of the boat shape, with the Kinderhook plate shape being deeper, otherwise they've got the same boat shape.

### Kinderhook Character and Ho e oop hah



So think how simple this would have been, Joseph could've obtained all the content that Clayton says he did from the Kinderhook plates by just matching one of the most prominent characters from the Kinderhook plates and one character from the second page of characters in the GAEL. I don't know if I mentioned before, but even though this is page 4 of the GAEL, it's only page two of listing the actual characters. So the comparison could have been really quick and really simple, and finding "Ah ha, there's a match." But it gets better.

## Eyewitness: Joseph Smith with the Kinderhook Plates, May 7, 1843

Another set of plates have been found in Pike county, in this State; they were dug out of a large mound, fifteen feet from the summit, by a company of persons, fifteen in number, who all affirm to the fact of their situation when found. There were six in number, about three inches in length, and two and a half broad at one end, and one inch broad at the other, being something of the form of a bell, about the sixteenth of an inch thick, with a hole in the small end of each, fastened together with a ring, apparently of iron or steel, but which was so oxidized as to crumble to pieces when handled. The plates are evidently brass, and are covered on both sides with hieroglyphics. They were brought up and shown to Joseph Smith. He compared them in my presence with his Egyptian alphabet, which he took from the plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated, and they are evidently the same characters. He therefore will be able to decipher them. There can be no doubt but they are a record of some kind, buried with an individual, centuries ago; a skeleton was found with them—some of the bones in such a state of preservation as to show the size of the individual, whose height must have been eight and a half feet. You may expect something very remarkably pretty soon.

Here we've got the *New York Herald* for May 30th, 1843, which published a letter from someone who signed as "A Gentile." Now looking at the letter and then from other correspondence, from this guy to James Gordon Bennett of the *Herald*, the editor, we find out that he is a friendly non-Mormon who lives in Nauvoo. So there is the close up so you can see the date, "Nauvoo, Illinois, May 7th, 1843," you'll notice that May 7th is the same date for the Parley P. Pratt letter where he says various people had examined the Kinderhook plates, and the same date for the Joseph Smith journal entry that also says that people had come calling on Joseph about the plates. He says a fair amount about the finding of the plates, and so on. But let me read you the crucial part here, "the plates are evidently brass, and are covered on both sides with hieroglyphics. They were brought up and shown to Joseph Smith. He compared, in my presence, with his Egyptian Alphabet," Now, the guys a non-Mormon here, and so he doesn't actually understand what this Egyptian Alphabet is. So he says, "which he took from the plates which the Book of Mormon was translated," but he doesn't know it's from the Book of Abraham papyrus, he says, "He compared, in my presence, with his Egyptian Alphabet...and they're evidently the same characters. He therefore will be able to decipher them." So this is the Alphabet and Grammar volume, and you can see the title on the spine says "Egyptian Alphabet." Now,

Robin Jenson, of the Joseph Smith papers tells me that we don't know when this label was added, it could have been added in Utah. If it was added early on, then this "gentile" would have seen this on the spine and obviously would have called it the "Egyptian Alphabet." Even if it is a later name that is affixed to it, it shows what the Saints actually knew this volume as, they knew it as "Egyptian Alphabet." So that is likely the name under which he would have heard of it.

## The Kinderhook Plates on May 7, 1843

- Willard Richards: Joseph Smith was "visited by several gentlemen concerning the plates" and sent for his "Hebrew Bible and Lexicon."
- Parley P. Pratt: "A large number of Citizens have seen them and compared the characters with those on the Egyptian papyrus which is now in this city," and the plates are "filled with engravings in Egyptian language."
- "A Gentile": Joseph Smith compared the Kinderhook plates characters "in my presence with his Egyptian alphabet...and they are evidently the same characters. He will therefore be able to decipher them."

So we now have three sources, dated May 7th, 1843. We have Willard Richards saying "Joseph was visited by several gentlemen concerning the plates," and sent for his Hebrew Bible and Lexicon. "Gentlemen" doesn't seem like the most likely term for him to use if he's talking his fellow Saints, it seems likely that he is referring to non-Mormons. And Mark and I are going to be looking into that further, but it looks, from a preliminary glance, like Richards uses that term for non-Mormons. Pratt says "a large number of citizens," and notice again this doesn't sound like he is talking about fellow Saints, this is more general than that, "have seen them and compared the characters with those on the Egyptian papyrus which is now in this city and the plates a filled with engravings in the Egyptian language." Now Pratt doesn't say that the Kinderhook plates characters were compared directly with the Egyptian papyrus, he says that they are compared with the characters that are on the Egyptian papyrus, which are the same characters that in this GAEL, or Egyptian Alphabet volume. And now we've got this fellow, "A Gentile," saying that Joseph Smith "compared the Kinderhook plates, in my presence, with his Egyptian Alphabet... and they are evidently the same characters. He therefore will be able to decipher them."

So what can we draw out of these sources? Joseph Smith was visited, presumably at his house, by several gentlemen or citizens on this day, among whom was likely this guy, "A Gentile," and he displayed to them the Kinderhook plates. And I would also infer from that



other things. Joseph wanted to show them the character match he had found and told Clayton about, so he sent William Smith, not for his Hebrew Lexicon, as Willard Richards thought, but for his Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar. Now Richards is keeping this journal for Joseph, rather than Joseph keeping it himself, if he's not present, he's not necessarily going to know what volume was sent for, he would hear about it from someone else. So I believe that the translation tool that Joseph actually sends for while talking to these gentlemen is the Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar, as "A Gentile" says.

So what's the significance of this guys account? The account dove-tails perfectly with those by Willard Richards and Parley Pratt in its content and timing; this account indicates not only that Joseph had compared the Kinderhook plates characters with those on his Egyptian alphabet, but it also says that he had found a match. "It is evidently the same characters," he said, so he to have found a match, and this match provided a definition for at least one character, and therefore the means by which Joseph could decipher the plates. So here we've got an eyewitness who is describing Joseph doing what we have just inferred he was doing, based on the content of the Clayton Journal entry and the content of the GAEL and the match of the characters there.

So what conclusions can we draw from all this? This is not really the conclusions we can draw for all this, this is a shameless plug for my forth-coming book, *The Lost 116 Pages: Discovering the Book of Mormons Unknown Stories*, which I had optimistically thought would be out in September, and now I'm trying to get out in November. Anyway, shameless plug over, so conclusions here: the text that Joseph from what Clayton calls a "portion" of the Kinderhook plates can be derived from a single character definition – so that portion that he is describing is probably just a single character - near the beginning of the Grammar and Alphabet of the Egyptian Language. Substantially the same character appears on the Kinderhook plates as one of their most prominent characters. An eyewitness account, written on the day of the event has Joseph Smith comparing the characters from the two sources, finding a match and enabling him to decipher at least one of the characters.

So, a larger conclusion that we can draw is that we've got both the smoking-gun – the GAEL that he uses to translate, and we've got an eyewitness. We know exactly how Joseph Smith attempted to translate from the Kinderhook plates and obtain the content that Clayton says he did. A larger conclusion, then, that we can draw is that Joseph Smith translated from the Kinderhook plates not by revelation, but by non-revelatory means.

So, we have James D. Bales saying "only a bogus prophet translates bogus plates," and we've got Joseph Smith saying, "a prophet is only a prophet when he is acting as such." And when a prophet is just comparing characters in two documents, he is not "acting as such." Thank you.